

Resource Management Plan Amendment for the San Joaquin Desert Hills

Hollister Field Office

Public Scoping Information & Preliminary Planning Criteria



The San Joaquin Desert Hills



Monocline Ridge above Arroyo Hondo

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) public lands in the western San Joaquin Valley stretch from the Panoche Hills southwards to Coalinga connecting a vast landscape of ancient desert-like habitats and open space with outstanding scenic and recreational values. These lands, administered by the BLM Hollister Field Office are known as the “San Joaquin Desert Hills”.

Here, family-owned ranches continue a legacy of sustainable grazing practices since the 19th century that research has shown provides major benefits for core populations of Federal and State listed species in the region that evolved from the disjunct San Joaquin Desert biological community. The region also contains significant paleontological resources, including a world-class deposit of Cretaceous marine reptile fossils; as well as important Native American archaeological and cultural sites. These resources provide BLM with opportunities and challenges that require careful planning in order to preserve this unique landscape for current and future generations.

Opportunity to Preserve Grazing & Listed Species

California’s rangelands are the foundation of the economic and social fabric of the State’s ranching industry and rural communities. However, these communities are increasingly facing threats to their traditional lifestyles due to dramatic fluctuation in cattle markets, forage productivity, subdivisions for residential housing, and conversion to other uses.

Since the 1980’s, BLM has purchased thousands of acres in the region from local ranchers with the understanding that the acquired lands will continue to be available for livestock grazing because of the beneficial effects of these activities on upland species of the San Joaquin Valley. Funding for the purchases came from the BLM, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) through the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), the Central Valley Project Conservation Program (CVPCP) and the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) Habitat Restoration Program (HRP) to protect listed species and habitats impacted by development in the Central Valley.

The acquisition of private lands from willing sellers in the San Joaquin Desert Hills planning area supports the goals of the BLM, BOR, and FWS, by contributing to the recovery of the San Joaquin kit fox, blunt-nosed leopard lizards, giant kangaroo rats, San Joaquin woolly-threads, and the California jewelflower. Acquisition of lands from willing sellers also provides an important source of revenue to local ranchers to support traditional lifestyles and continue operations during periods of economic uncertainty.

A New Plan for Panoche?

The BLM's Hollister Field Office intends to prepare a Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment with an associated Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Panoche-Coalinga Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Development of the RMP Amendment will begin with a 30-day public scoping period from September 18, 2012 to October 18, 2012 to gather public comments and identify issues to be addressed in the RMP Amendment.

Public Scoping for Ideas & Opportunities

The purpose of the public scoping process is to determine relevant issues that will influence the environmental analysis, including alternatives, and guide the planning process. Preliminary issues for the plan amendment area have been identified by BLM personnel; Federal, State, and local agencies; and other stakeholders. The issues include: designation and management of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and Research Natural Areas; special status species recovery; recreation management; energy development; livestock grazing; fire management; and lands available for disposal or of interest for acquisition.

Federal, State, and local agencies, along with tribes and other stakeholders that may be interested in or affected by the proposed RMP Amendment are invited to participate in the scoping process and, if eligible, may request or be requested by the BLM to participate in the development of the environmental analysis as a cooperating agency.

More information about public involvement opportunities is provided on the following pages and the BLM website:

<http://www.blm.gov/ca/hollister>



Monvero Dunes — Monocline Ridge

Public Involvement Opportunities?

How You Can Participate in the RMP Amendment Process:

The public scoping period started on September 18, 2012 with an announcement in the [Federal Register](#). During the scoping period, BLM will be seeking public input on preliminary issues and planning criteria for the RMP Amendment that are outlined in this brochure.

Written public comments on issues and planning criteria may be submitted by any of the following methods:

Mail: Hollister Field Office, 20 Hamilton Court, Hollister, CA 95023

E-mail: BLM_CA_Hollister_RMP@blm.gov

Fax: (831) 630-5055

To foster community participation, BLM will host two public scoping workshops in San Benito and Fresno counties to discuss the plan. Details for public meetings, including the time and location of public scoping meetings are provided on the following page and will be announced through local media and BLM news releases on the BLM's website.

All comments must be received no later than 30 days after the last public meeting.

Your comments are important to us, particularly at this early stage of the process.



Lower Silver Creek, Fresno County



Panoche Hills, Fresno County

Public Scoping Workshop Schedule:

The public scoping workshops will be designed to present information to the public and obtain input from participants. The scoping meetings will combine an informational open house with a brief presentation from BLM to provide an overview of the plan purpose, objectives, and schedule.

A question and answer session will be included during the public scoping workshops and BLM will record verbal comments from public speakers that participate in the scoping workshops.

Dates, time, and locations are listed below:

October 9, 2012: Veteran's Memorial Hall
(5:30 – 7:30 PM) 649 San Benito Street
Hollister, CA 95023

October 11, 2012: Panoche School
(5:30 – 7:30 PM) 31441 Panoche Road
Paicines, CA 95043

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION and/or to be added to our mailing list, contact Sky Murphy: telephone (831) 630-5039; Hollister Field Office, 20 Hamilton Court, Hollister, CA 95023; or e-mail: BLM_CA_Hollister_RMP@blm.gov

Please Note: There will be additional opportunities to participate in the RMP Amendment process after the public scoping period closes, so stay tuned!

Preliminary Planning Criteria:

BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610) require preparation of planning criteria to guide development of all resource management plans. Planning criteria are the constraints, or ground rules, that guide and direct the development of the plan and determine how the planning team approaches the development of alternatives and ultimately, selection of a Preferred Alternative. They ensure that plans are tailored to the identified issues and ensure that unnecessary data collection and analysis are avoided. Planning criteria are based on standards prescribed by applicable laws and regulations, agency guidance, the result of consultation and coordination with the public, other Federal, state and local agencies and governmental entities, and Native American Tribes, and analysis of information pertinent to the planning area.

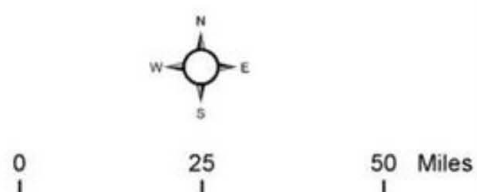
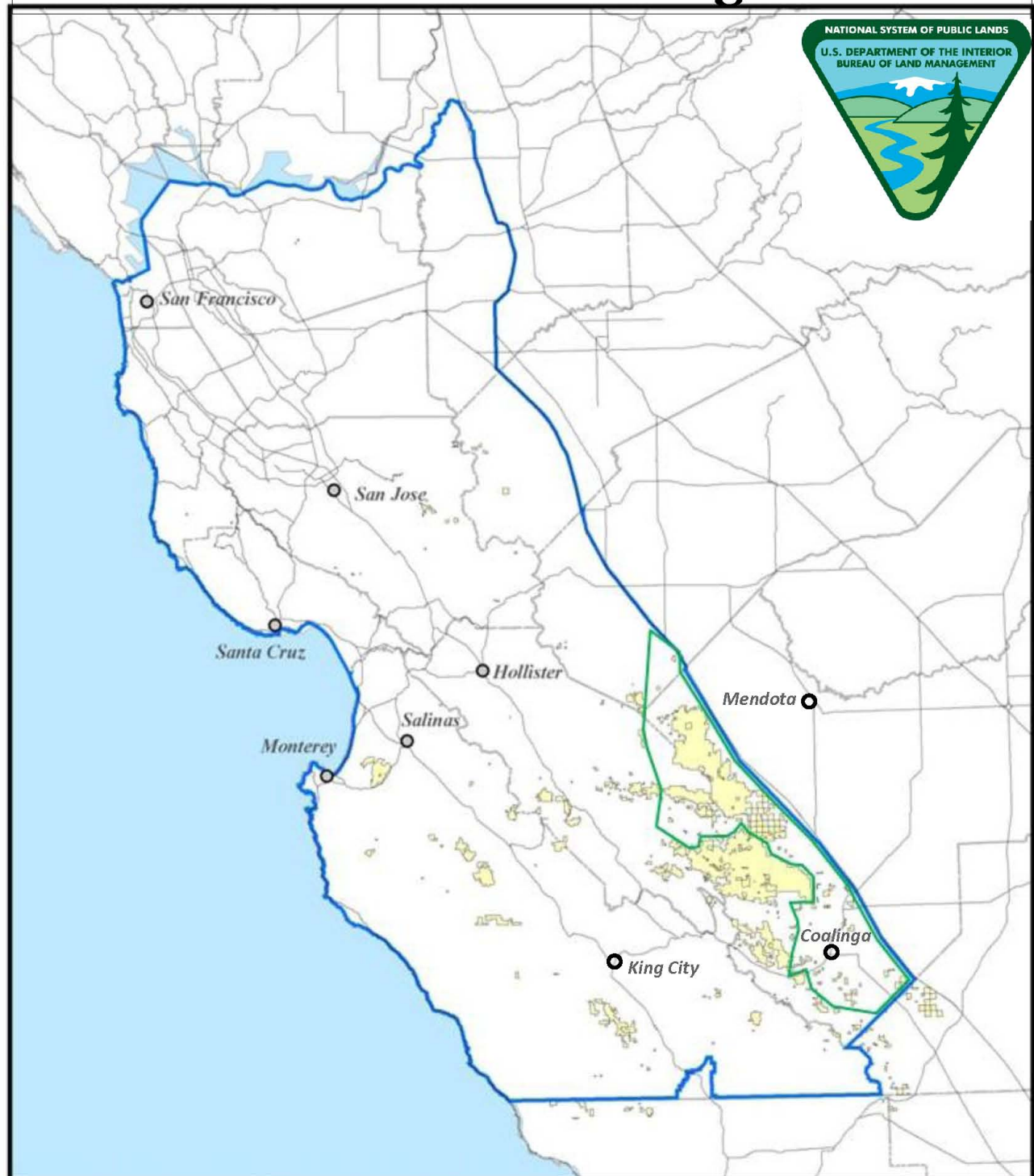
Preliminary planning criteria for the RMP Amendment include:

1. Compliance with FLPMA, NEPA and all other applicable laws.
2. Coordination with local governments for analysis of economic and social impacts..
3. Government-to-government consultation with federally recognized tribes.
4. Designation of motorized use areas and routes.
5. Compliance with Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines.
6. Consideration of cost effectiveness of proposed actions and alternatives.



Core populations of Giant Kangaroo Rats & San Joaquin kit fox are in the Planning Area.

RMP Amendment Planning Area





U.S. Department of Interior

Bureau of Land
Management
Hollister Field Office
20 Hamilton Court
Hollister, CA 95023

Mailing Address Line 1
Mailing Address Line 2
Mailing Address Line 3
Mailing Address Line 4

Phone: 831-630-5000

Fax: 831-630-5055

E-mail: BLM_CA_Hollister_RMP@blm.gov

Internet:

<http://www.blm.gov/ca/hollister>

The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, live-stock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving

BLM manages 15.2 million acres of public lands in California - nearly 15% of the state's land area. The Hollister Field Office administers approximately 284,000 acres of public land in Central California. Bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the west and the San Joaquin Valley to the east, elevations range from sea level to over 5,000 feet and major landforms include the Diablo Mountain Range, Salinas Valley, and San Joaquin Valley.



Blunt-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia sila*)

Within the lands managed by the Hollister Field Office are three Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, two Research Natural Areas, two National Monuments, a National Historic Trail, and a National Recreation Trail.